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Paul Praises Victory for Social Security Number Privacy *Legislation Will Help Prevent Identity Theft*

Washington, D.C. - Congressman Ron Paul joined over 380 of his Congressional colleagues in voting last night to pass the "Social Security Number Confidentiality Act"(H.R. 3218). The Act, introduced by Congressman Ken Calvert of California and cosponsored by Paul, was designed to ensure that Social Security numbers will no longer be visible through the window of benefits checks mailed each month to more than 14 million Americans. A growing number of Social Security recipients had become concerned that the visibility of the number in envelopes used by the Treasury department could leave them vulnerable to identity theft. In 1999, the Treasury department had to stop payment on more than one million Social Security checks which had been incorrectly issued to criminals who had assumed another's identity by using the victim's Social Security number.

Paul is known for his pro-privacy legislation in Congress. Last year he introduced the "Freedom and Privacy Restoration Act" (H.R. 220), which forbids the federal government from using Social Security numbers for purposes not related to the administration of benefits. "The Social Security number has become a national identifier used to track Americans from cradle to grave," Paul stated. "It's time to restore privacy to the American people by limiting the use of Social Security numbers by the invasive federal government. Congress should remember Franklin Roosevelt's promise that only the Social Security Administration would ever know an individual's number."

The Treasury department originally had taken the position that Social Security numbers no longer would be visible on benefits checks in two to three years, the time needed to upgrade their computers for a new mailing system. However, Treasury officials ultimately agreed to begin using check numbers rather than Social Security numbers to identify and retrieve payments, acknowledging the inevitability of Congressional action.

"I'm encouraged that Congress supported this legislation," Paul stated. "Seniors should not have to worry about identity theft each month when they receive their Social Security check. The Treasury department has an obligation to protect everyone's private number from thieves. This bill forced the Treasury to take commonsense steps to protect the privacy of Social Security recipients."

